

## BOOK REVIEW

BENOÎT DAYRAT. 2003. **Les botanistes et la flore de France: trois siècles de découvertes.** (ISBN 2-85653-548-8). Publications Scientifiques du Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, 57, rue Cuvier, 1-75005 Paris, FRANCE. (Orders: Tel. [33](0)1-40 79 3700; Fax [33](0)1-40 79 3858; e-mail: diff.pub@mnhn.fr). Price not given, 690 pp., Illus., color plates, portraits, 6 1/2" × 9 1/2".

This massive work of scholarship is not, Dayrat declares, a history of botany in France but rather the history of the discovery of plants in France from 1753 to the early twentieth century. He details the lives of those authors of at least one species considered valid in current flora. The lives of the early doctors, pharmacists, members of the military and of the clergy, essentially amateurs, their explorations through the various regions of France, their personal triumphs and tragedies, the political and intellectual intrigues make fascinating reading. By their associations many additional botanists are cameoed in extensive footnotes, which also include bibliographical details of published works as well as references from many, often obscure resources, such as regional botanical journals. Each biography concludes with the valid species the author described; these species are again listed under the author's name in a separate section. Every person cited is indexed in one of two indices, the other being comprehensive.

Much botanical history is necessarily included in these biographies: the history of botanical investigations of such influential persons as Lamarck and Jussieu, of Candolle, of the eccentric Alexis Jordan; the first microphotography by Brébisson, and the development of the academic discipline of botany. There is also considerable history of the many botanical and Linnaean societies throughout France and the establishment of her numerous botanical gardens.

As a final word Dayrat, a post-doctoral student at the California Academy of sciences, reflecting on California plants, urges the documentation of the history of discoveries of fauna and flora throughout the world.

This is an important work and should be made accessible to all botanists and those in related sciences.—Joann Karges, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX, 76102-4060, U.S.A.*